



## *South Shropshire Furniture Scheme*

### *Annual Report 2009/10*

*registered charity 1082068*

*company 4041051*



## Statistics

People provided with doorstep service  
3,500

Household items collected 10,500

Visitors to the warehouse 11,250

Visitors to Renaissance Centre 18,000

Visitors to Church Stretton 3,000

People accessing training opportunities  
85?

92 volunteers on this year's database

72 people visited SSFS in their quest to  
make their organisation more sustainable

We have given out 20 grants through SRC  
& HG Enabling Fund

We assisted 8 women fleeing domestic  
violence

74 tonnes of bulky waste collected

1650 community hours (6 people)

1526 bins and boxes delivered to  
households in Southern Shropshire

## Staff

Jean Jarvis - Chief Executive  
Jane Price - Operations Manager  
Bob Russell - Carpentry Workshop Manager  
Stefan Laird - Carpentry Workshop Supervisor  
Graham Lambourne - Volunteer Support Worker  
Paul Francis - Statistics  
Chris Breakwell - Vehicle & Computer  
Recycling Manager  
John Richards - Driver (Jan—March 10)  
Mike Cornhill - Warehouse Link Officer  
Scott Thackeray - Driver  
Gill Green - Training & Development Manager  
Peta Sams - Finance  
John Jones - Customer Service Assistant  
Mike Jones - Project Development  
Serena Penn-Harvey - Volunteer Coordinator  
Rosemary Collie - Project Development  
Elaine Duggan - Care Information Provider (SSCIP)/  
Community Directory  
James Cooper - Project Support Officer/PA to CEO  
Alex Hughes - Customer Service Assistant (Feb 10)  
Tim Stevens - Warehouse and Van Assistant  
Simon Magill - Van Driver  
Gary Bennett - Carpentry Assistant (May 10)  
Anthony Weaver - Carpentry (May—July 10)  
Matthew Archer - Customer Service Assistant  
Mark Hirons - Customer Service Assistant  
Richard Carpenter - Customer Service Assistant

## Board of Directors

Bill Duley (Secretary)  
Susan McCormack  
Monica Green (Chairman)  
Philip Reckless  
Helen Wilson  
Jonathan Brown  
Julian Price (Co-opted)  
Bill Jones  
Niall McCormack

Jean Jarvis - Company Secretary





## Foreword

By Jean Jarvis, CEO of SSFS

Where to start! We've raised our profile as a successful social enterprise, held up nationally as a great example. We've opened our doors to other organisations providing showcase visits and consultancy to help them become more financially sustainable, growing the numbers of social enterprises, primarily in Shropshire, but further afield. 27% of our staff team of 22 are under 25, which I feel is great progress.

**Social Enterprise:** We co organised the successful Inspire conference in Shropshire and swelled our volunteer numbers to almost 90, providing training opportunities to all of them.

**Training:** All staff have undergone some form of personal development, many have moved into new roles as we backfill with new staff and staff and key volunteers have received mental health first aid training, equipping them with the tools to engage confidently with people accessing our services.

**Partnerships:** With Shropshire Housing Alliance we have developed and set up a new CIC, REVIIVE, our fabulous eco-chic shop in Shrewsbury, with funds from the modernisation fund to oil the process. With Rockspring Community Trust, using their facilities to hold events and deliver training, promoting our services to people living in the Ludlow East ward.

**Innovation:** Our funky furniture project with Ludlow College has been a great success and upcycled (in a very

stylish way) chairs that would have been recycled. Our contract with Veolia has expanded and we are providing more services over a wider area.

The numbers of people visiting our shops and warehouse has grown considerably allowing people from all walks of life to buy a wide range of reuse household items to suit their pocket.

**Future plans:** We have plans to open our shops more hours, provide more placements and training opportunities and keep our profile up - spreading the word about what we do so that the hard to reach rural inhabitants can access our services. SSFS management team has grown and matured, 50% of the staff have been with us for over 5 years and have developed into a team of entrepreneurs, making our social enterprise an exciting and vibrant place to work. I am very proud of the way they adapt to change and turn challenge into opportunity.

I feel in these uncertain times we have come into our own, public services will be delivered by social enterprises – we're used to working to a tight budget and providing added value. More people, not only those on extremely low income, are realising the benefits of buying reuse furniture and the private sector has great confidence in our ability to deliver great services.

Through 2010/11 we also plan to focus on raising awareness to the other services we provide, such as training and infrastructure support. People know we do furniture, now it's time to let them know what else we do. We are determined to continue to deserve our hard won reputation.

## Big Society:

"I feel in these uncertain times we have come into our own, public services will be delivered by social enterprises – we're used to working to a tight budget and providing added value"



## Training and Development: Annual Report 2010

This year we have further developed our training so that we offer a much more flexible programme which takes the learner from the start of *Developing a Personal Learning Programme*, through to *Work Experience, Health and Safety Awareness* and *Customer Service* to finish whichever area of SSFS the volunteer is working in. All these are OCN accredited at Level 1

and have been developed so that the learner can gain a nationally recognised *Award in Progression* that is portable and can be built on with credits towards the Certificate then Diploma. All this is fully embedded in the organisation. In the last 12 months we have delivered to over 100 of our staff/volunteer team. We will be looking to develop training programmes in Recycling and Waste over the coming 12 months.

Even keeping an eye on what's up and coming we were still taken by surprise with the changes to the Welfare to Work Programmes and the demand for 4 or 13 week work experience placements! We were able to respond to this need almost overnight! It continues to be a difficult issue but we will be looking at how we might address this in the months ahead and it is likely to be one of the major tasks ahead not just for us but the voluntary sector at large given the expected further changes in work programmes and in light of the public spending review and the shift to local delivery of public services.

Mental ill health has become an increasing factor in our work and the *Ecominds Project* has meant we have been able to focus on training and development to better support our client group. There is an ever-increasing need for capacity but also capability and high level skills

amongst the staff team. Mike Jones and I qualified as Mental Health First Aid instructors and have delivered MHFA to all staff and many of our volunteer team in this last 12 months so we are much better equipped to support those with mental ill health.

This year has seen me take the lead on the Future Jobs Fund, a government funded programme aimed at getting the long term young unemployed into work. We have taken on 4 young people across the organisation two of whom we have been able to offer extended contracts to. As I write we have taken on a further three through the scheme, two at Weeping Cross Lane and one at the Renaissance Centre.

We have put considerable focus this year on staff training and development. All relevant staff are now trained to an accredited level in Lifting and Handling, Health and Safety at Work, Food Hygiene and First Aid and all teaching staff have at least the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector Award, which is the minimum requirement. The training team have accessed training and awareness workshops in Volunteer Management, Dealing with Challenging Behaviour, Domestic Violence, Working with Adults with Learning Difficulties and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults to name a few. This coming year will see some key staff receive management and development training at Levels 3 and 5 and awareness workshops in Aspergers Syndrome, Working with Offenders and Befriending and Mentoring. Our system of Supervision and Support and Appraisal will facilitate us training our staff in line with future business developments in the year ahead and I would like to develop more mentoring within the organisation so that we can better share the existing skills in the team.

All in all it has been a fast moving year and looks set to be so for some time to come!



**Tea room volunteer Kath Bills receiving her civic award from Mayor of Ludlow, John Aitken.** Kath has been a dedicated volunteer with the South Shropshire Furniture Scheme for nearly 6 years, her role within the organisation is the management of the Renaissance Centre Tea Rooms. In 2004 Kath responded to an advert in our window for someone to empty the dishwasher and 6 years on she's running the place! She is one of our longest serving volunteers. Kath dedicates so much time to our Social Enterprise, not only does she prepare the food and menus, she also coordinates other volunteers to help out when the tea room is open. Her commitment is unflinching and is admired by everyone within the organisation.



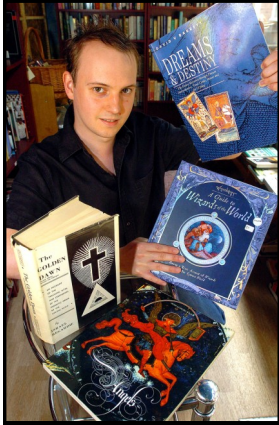
**A selection of the funky chairs created by Ludlow College students during the Funky Furniture project—a collaboration between SSFS and the college**



**Chris Breakwell receiving the Pride of Shropshire Award 2010 from BBC Radio Shropshire presenter Eric Smith .**



**Peter Holbrook, Social Enterprise Coalition CEO, addressing the delegates at the Inspire Shropshire conference in June**



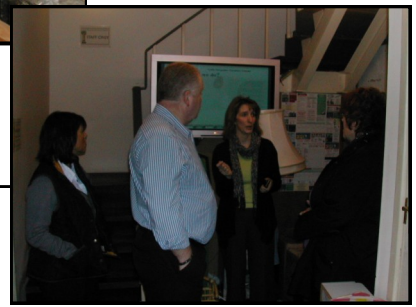
We employed Alex Hughes as a customer service assistant in Reviive after he had completed six months with the future jobs fund at SSFS



Veolia's Operations Manager, Mark Hunter, hands over the keys for a van they have sponsored for Reviive, to Jean Jarvis, CEO SSFS



Graham Lambourn talks to visitors in our carpentry workshop during an SRC tour



Jane Price leading an SRC tour



James Cooper assisted with the organisation of the Inspire Conference in June.



Our new shop on the Battlefield Park Shrewsbury in partnership with Shropshire Housing Alliance



Room settings at Reviive, Battlefield Enterprise Park, Shrewsbury

## Computer Recycling by Chris Breakwell

The computer project operations are now running as normal with the volunteers and trainees that participate in this project. Our storage facilities are limited but with the assistance of the volunteers, can be used efficiently. The training areas for all our students has at times been reduced due to our numbers but the enjoyable social atmosphere made by the students makes up for this.

Trainees for this period have come with little or no knowledge of computers so this has been a clean start in all learning sessions. This year's students have been varied in their abilities to absorb the information which has been taught in the workshop, their anxieties and social interaction has created, at times, a testing environment. Hopefully they will find this course to be beneficial not only in technical terms but also socially.

Our volunteers in the computer-recycling workshop have performed well. Mostly they will perform any task assigned to them and conduct themselves appropriately to the task, given their surroundings. These volunteers are greatly valued within this project and perform a valuable service in terms of recycling waste materials away from landfill sites.



## Projects

In the first year of the **Sustaining Rural Communities** project, funded by Big Lottery, over 40 groups have benefitted from our support and many more have accessed the project through various events. We are on track to meet our outcomes and have had a number of successes.

**Shropshire Community Recycling Ltd** (SCRL) continues to promote recycling activity in Shropshire. SCRL has 38 member organisations, involving over 1000 volunteers. 3791 people are participating in new recycling activity and 615 tonnes have been diverted from landfill as a result.

In the Spring of 2010 SSFS were asked to administer a **HG Enabling Fund**. Several families and individuals have been helped by the fund which supports those who want to take steps to improve their prospects for the future but who are lacking the funds to be able to overcome certain barriers and hurdles to do this.

## Ecominds

The Meeting of Minds Empowerment Project has been funded by Ecominds, a £7.5million funding scheme run by Mind on behalf of the BIG Lottery Fund. Ecominds involves people with direct experience of mental distress in environmental projects that improve their mental and physical health, and local communities by improving confidence and self esteem.

Over the past year we have been able to employ 7 people through the **Future Jobs Fund** of which 2 went on to be permanently employed here at SSFS and 3 are still within their 6 month contract. All 7 have benefitted from the valuable opportunity for personal development.

### **Renaissance Centre by Jane Price**

The Renaissance Centre has had a very good year with increased sales and footfall. July – Sept 2010 saw sales increase by 16% on the previous quarter and an increase of 294% on the same period last year. We have been extremely lucky with the quality of donations this year and have implemented a new system which helps to ensure that Renaissance is stocked and displayed to its full potential at all times, we feel that the figures above show that this new system is working well. We are all looking forward to the next twelve months and are looking at ways to maximise sales even further.



### **Marketing & Community Directory by Elaine Duggan**

It's been a busy but very enjoyable 12 months since I joined SSFS. Initially I had quite a task updating all the records in the Community Directory on Shropshire Council's website of the 636 records I look after, all needed updating at once! I also produce leaflets on specific subjects which I try to update quarterly, these are handed out when I attend events. Apart from attending events in the Southern Shropshire area, I have been out on the Library Van on 15 different routes in the Ludlow and Bridgnorth areas. This is an excellent way of promoting the Community Directory, SRC project, and South Shropshire Furniture Scheme. I also attend the Volunteer Forum meetings in Ludlow, Cleobury Mortimer and Bridgnorth. My other hat within SSFS is sending out press releases to the newspapers and village newsletters. I also work with Serena in producing the quarterly Volunteer News, and I look after the SSFS website.

### **The Secret Bookshop by Helen Muir**

Sales this year are about 50% up on last year at about £7000 to date. On two occasions we almost took £1000 in a month. Amazon sales contributed £700 of this with books going all over the world including Brazil USA and New Zealand.

The new line of vinyl records looks set to make a good contribution in the future.

Overall I am very pleased with the contribution that my book sales make to the running of this marvellous charity.

### **Renaissance Centre Tea Room by Kath Bills**

It's been another enjoyable year in the tea room. We still have our loyal local and visiting regulars and considering the number of places to eat and drink between here and the castle we're keeping the Renaissance tea room on the map. Favourites on the menu this year have been bakewell tart, fresh cream sponge and the home baked ham. One group of holiday makers who came in twice on one day said "such a happy and welcoming atmosphere". This year both Sue and Gwen passed their Food Hygiene Certificates—well done! Many thanks to Sue who now makes most of the soup and also washes the tea towels and napkins (as well as putting up with me!) And finally—what about that Civic Award! Thank you to all our customers for your support.

### **Carpentry by Bob Russell**

During the last 12 months the workshop has processed 465 different pieces of furniture. This has been achieved by not only our three regular staff, Bob, Stefan and Graham but with the help of the trainees and volunteers who come in on a twice weekly basis. Four of our volunteers have been coming to us regularly now for over two years! The others mostly do a 10 week course, starting very basically with a bird box and according to their skills progress to restoring furniture. One trainee came all the way from Wolverhampton during the ice and snow of the winter to learn joinery skills rather than furniture because he wanted to set up his own business, we were able to make a model door with him, complete with lock key and hinges. Another just wanted to learn lathe work, we were able to save up our turning work until he was competent at turning quite complicated things like a chair leg with an offset pad foot, another wanted to learn to French Polish, but most are quite happy to learn whatever needs doing.

During this year we received a quite sizeable donation from a former trainee who now has a good job and wanted to show his appreciation for the help he had received from his time with us. We have been able to buy some much needed turning and carving chisels and a face sander, thank you Ben. This has been a good year for us in that we have produced a good number of items to keep up with the demand of the Renaissance Centre, had many trainees through, but we have also been able to maintain the really good atmosphere that we have had in the past.

### **HR developments by Jane Price**

The Furniture Scheme continues to grow and develop and this year we felt that we needed to move from our own in-house HR system to a more sophisticated on-line software and business support package. After some recommendations we decided on one called IQ Employment Manager. This has given us the ability to stay up to date with changes in government legislation as and when it happens and even includes a free 24/7 telephone legal advice service which as we all know, can be very expensive!

### **Inspire Conference**

The inaugural Inspire Shropshire Conference was held in Craven Arms in June. The event, jointly coordinated by SSFS, Mid-west Rural, Shropshire Council & the Community Council of Shropshire, was attended by 68 delegates from across the sector. Speakers Peter Holbrook (Social Enterprise Coalition CEO) & Andy Whittaker (The Art of Brilliance) motivated and entertained while the workshops proved useful to all. The event was a huge success & will be the first of many.

## Volunteers and Placements by Serena Penn Harvey

It's been another busy year and as always we really appreciate all the hours that all of our volunteers have put in. We value everything our volunteers have done for SSFS, whether it's cleaning ovens, selling sofas, painting chairs or baking cakes.

The volunteer program has developed further this year with new policies, procedures and roles being made available to current and newly recruited volunteers. New volunteers are being introduced to the scheme through a newly developed, structured recruitment program. This is proving to be beneficial and an excellent starting point. This year has seen the review process for volunteers developing and proving to be an excellent way for identifying training needs and also a way of volunteers sharing information and requests.

There are currently 87 volunteers working at SSFS some regular, some casual and some we provide short intensive work based training placements for. We still offer the opportunity for volunteers to take on varying roles with differing levels of responsibility its lovely to see people gain confidence and develop their roles within SSFS.

Volunteers were celebrated during national volunteers week in June, the tea party gathering was a success and enjoyed by all, as well as tea and cake the volunteers were given a certificate to show our appreciation of the work that they do here at the scheme. Kath Bills' hard work was deservedly celebrated when she proudly received a Civic Award in May. Well done Kath!

Once again thank you to everybody who has contributed to a great year—keep up the hard work we couldn't do it without you!



Monica & Serena at a volunteer event

## Chairman's final word by Monica Green

**This has been a very successful year for SSFS** :The Big Lottery funded Sustaining Rural Communities project which enables us to provide help and support to other charities and social enterprises to enable them to become more self supporting is proving very successful.

The tea room continues to be very popular and regular customers enjoy homemade food and a friendly welcome provided by Kath Bills, Sue Britten and their helpers.

Sales at the Renaissance Centre and at Weeping Cross Lane continue to rise. This is in no small measure due to the high quality of the furniture that is produced by the Carpentry Workshop.

We are finding that clients on low incomes prefer to choose their furniture and receive a 25% discount off the price.

The 'R' shop at Church Stretton retains our presence in the area and is a valuable source of information.

We are administering a fund providing grants to enable people to progress in obtaining work, training or starting self employment. This has proved very successful and will continue into the future. The Future Jobs Fund is enabling us to give training and work experience to young people to enable them to find employment and this is also proving a great help to the scheme.

Collections remain buoyant and we continue to deliver replacement wheelie bins and boxes in the Southern Shropshire areas. The success of this is due to the hard work of our drivers and the volunteers involved.

Our partnership with Rockspring Community Centre continues to develop and allows us to promote our services to the people in the Ludlow East ward.

Finally I would like to say a very big thank you to Jean Jarvis our Chief Executive whose vision and enthusiasm has enabled us to move forward and to all the staff and volunteers without whose hard work and commitment none of this would have been possible.

